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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0993  
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5741  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 3417  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 1498  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2520  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 5242  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2860  
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 3341  
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 3170  
RUEHBD/AMCONSUL PERTH 1344  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RHHJJPI/USPACOM HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 002271

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEAN](#) [ID](#)  
SUBJECT: ASEAN CHARTER ENTERS INTO FORCE

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph L. Novak, reasons 1.4(b+d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: ASEAN Foreign Ministers met in Jakarta on December 15 to mark the ASEAN Charter's entry into force. (The Charter makes ASEAN a legal body and sets forth a framework for regional integration.) At the formal ceremony marking the occasion, President Yudhoyono called on ASEAN to play a greater role in global issues. He also called on states that have not yet done so to sign the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in order to formalize their relationship with ASEAN. Participants also agreed to hold the ASEAN Summit in Thailand before the end of February 2009.  
END SUMMARY.

CHARTER ENTERS INTO FORCE

¶2. (U) All ten ASEAN Foreign Ministers gathered at the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta to observe the entry into force of the ASEAN Charter on December 15. The Ambassador and other members of the diplomatic corps attended the ceremonial opening session. Secretary General Surin opened the proceedings with a promise that the Charter would accelerate the process of ASEAN integration. He reiterated ASEAN's commitment to develop a single market by 2015.

SUMMIT RESCHEDULED

¶3. (C) Speaking on behalf of the ASEAN Chair, Thai Minister for Information and Communications Mun Patanotai announced that Thailand would host the ASEAN Summit before the end of February 2009. (Note: The ASEAN Summit and other regional meetings had been scheduled for December 15-18 in Chiang Mai, Thailand. However, the Summit was postponed due to the Thai political crisis.) SecGen Surin later announced tentative dates of February 24-26, 2009. ASEAN officials have not yet decided whether the Summit will take place in Bangkok or Chiang Mai, according to contacts.

CALL FOR REGIONAL LEADERSHIP

¶4. (U) In his address marking the occasion, President Yudhoyono called on ASEAN to play a greater role in the international system, particularly on energy, food security, climate change and the global financial crisis. He praised ASEAN's record of ensuring peace and security in Southeast Asia and said the organization was at the center of the

emerging Asian regional order. The Indonesian leader also hailed the Charter's endorsement of the "universal values of democracy and human rights."

¶5. (U) Yudhoyono also called for states outside the organization to deepen their engagement with ASEAN. He called on states that have not yet done so to sign the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in order to formalize their relationship with the regional grouping. He noted that ASEAN was at the center of the regional architecture, including the various ASEAN 1 arrangements, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the East Asian Summit.

¶6. (C) The Foreign Ministers did not discuss the draft Terms of Reference (TOR) for the ASEAN Human Rights Body (AHRB), according to Singapore Embassy contacts. (Note: The TOR had been slated for discussion in the ministerial meeting that was to have taken place in Chiang Mai.) Contacts at the Department of Foreign Affairs (DEPLU) told us that the AHRB remains a top priority for Indonesia. The GOI will continue to push this matter in subsequent ASEAN meetings, including the rescheduled Summit, per contacts.

#### A MAINLY CEREMONIAL GATHERING

¶7. (C) Several of our contacts described the meeting as primarily "ceremonial" in nature. The ministers agreed to reschedule the Summit, but took no action on any other major initiatives and did not discuss the human rights mechanism, which has been the subject of debate. Given the postponement of the Chiang Mai event, ASEAN officials were very keen to

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hold some sort of meeting as scheduled in order to maintain "momentum" in the Charter's implementation process. They also wanted to create a sense of normality for the organization given the ongoing turmoil in Thailand, according to contacts. By touching base briefly in Jakarta, ASEAN seemed to accomplish these limited objectives.

HUME